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SUBJECTS : LENS, SIDNEY

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APPEALS REVIEW FORM

305.Tab A-41 contains MEMO - NO #dated 5 Oct 1967

with 2 ATTACHMENTS

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- Located during the DDO appeals review.
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Further description, identification, comments, and/or referrals, etc.

This memo denied in toto to Sidney Lens (F 75-186).
 Only ATT. #I mentions KING BRIEFLY on Pg. 3.

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E2 IMPDET
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5 OCT 1967

SUBJECT: Views on Domestic Racial Situation
and the New Politics Convention

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Date 13 MAR 76



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In any case, strongly believed that King had the possibility of playing a future role of great importance in the black community.

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11. The Bureau may pass the above report to appropriate field offices for Background Use Only.

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Backgrd

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Date 19 AUG 1976

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5 OCT 1967

SOURCE: Views of Sidney Lens on Domestic Racial Situation
and the New Politics Convention

1. Sidney Lens was extremely pessimistic about the present political situation in the United States. He believed that the growing racial strife was bringing about the breakup of the American liberal consensus, revealing the "cynicism and hypocrisy" of the American power structure. He wondered whether liberal reforms to head off a violent domestic strife and inevitable repression of black militants and left liberals and radicals were even possible. He believed that some sort of vast conspiracy on the right might be already underway to destroy American Democracy.
2. Lens' state of depression might in part be explained by the failure of the New Politics Convention, with which Lens was greatly involved. He said that the Black Caucus and the CPUSA had virtually wrecked the Convention, yet the Communists had failed to get the Convention's support for a King-Spoek or some other third ticket in the 1968 presidential elections, which the Communists were very eager to obtain.
3. Lens said that relative racial peace had been maintained in Chicago during the summer by massive sums of money moving into the pockets of known black nationalist leaders, youth gang leaders and certain local politicians. This operation, to keep Chicago "cool", had been successful, but had also produced much cynicism among ordinary black people who were beginning to understand at last what went on and to feel abused by such treatment. Lens believed that conditions were such that Black people in Chicago could not fail to protest militantly in the future, and perhaps not only during hot weather. The black community, he maintained, showed great solidarity, despite its divisions. According to Lens, not one Negro sniper was caught or denounced during the summer.
4. Lens said he had been able to maintain fairly good contacts with many Negroes in the ghettos and with black intellectuals, and he seemed to have a fairly self-confident idea of what was going on within the black community.
5. He maintained that white radicals in general, however, had virtually no influence inside the ghettos and that the Daily machine was more influential than the Progressive Labor, the CPUSA or the Socialist Workers Party. He knew nothing about RAM's influence, if any, but said that the center of black nationalist activity seemed at present in the West Garfield area.

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6. Concerning any possible black conspiracy on a nationwide scale, Lens thought this was nonsense. Ties between groups and leaders had been reported to him as loose, with many feuds between them, Lens said. He added that he had heard of no international contacts by black nationalists, except the well-known trips abroad of SNCC leaders.

7. Lens remained a strong admirer of Dr. Martin Luther King, who he felt had made many mistakes in his Chicago operations, but who nevertheless was a sincere leader who maintained his charisma over the black masses, despite the demagogic behavior of the leaders of the smaller black extremist groups. On the other hand, Lens felt that Rev. James Bevel was often erratic and even irresponsible in his actions. In any case, Lens strongly believed that King had the possibility of playing a future role of great importance in the black community.

8. Lens said he had heard nothing from the organizers of the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam, which he had attended, and wondered if any efforts at all were being made by the Continuing Committee of the Conference to develop peace initiatives. He said that he had never heard from the Latin Americans who had proposed in Stockholm that U.S. and Latin American peace militants hold a meeting somewhere in the near future. Lens thought they had dropped the idea, which was to have been concratized through him, as chairman of the American Delegation in Stockholm, but could not understand why.

9. Speaking of his associates in the peace movement, he said that Staughton Lynd, although a member of the editorial board of Liberation, never consulted him about anything. Perhaps, Lens felt, this was because Lynd was very hostile to any proposals for electoral action, while Lens was not. As for Dave Dellinger, Lens said he did not understand what Dellinger was up to these days. Dellinger, he maintained, had assumed an "equivocal attitude" to the pacifist principles he had believed in until the death of A.J. Muste. Lens said he had never heard Dellinger explain himself or his projects.

10. Attached is a hand-out of a paper entitled "Some Thoughts on the NCP Conference" written by Lens, and a copy of a press release containing Lens' statement on his return to the States from the Stockholm Conference on Vietnam, 6-9 July 1967.

11. The Bureau may pass the above report to appropriate field offices for Background Use Only. It is requested no direct action be taken against the Subject on the basis of the contents of this report without prior consultation with this Agency. This restriction may be considered withdrawn one month after Source's departure from the United States, although the fact that these statements were made by Subject should continue to be considered restricted.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE NCNP CONFERENCE

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Chicago, Illinois 60615

1. The Conference was a noble attempt to bring about a coalition of three groups which generally shared a common political perspective for remaking America in a new mold, but disagreed rather strongly on short term strategies for achieving it. One group, believing the movement was still too weak to merit a dramatic national action in the electoral field, wanted to concentrate on organizing community groups as a sort of on-going Vietnam Summer. A second group felt that 1968 offered an exceptional opportunity for a breakthrough to hundreds of thousands who were not yet aligned with the movement, and suggested that in addition to protest and resistance a new type of Presidential campaign, concentrating less on votes and more on sinking roots, would widen the movement's influence appreciably. A third group, the Black Caucus, sympathized with both strategies but believed that before a meaningful coalition could be built, Black Americans must first concentrate on creating their own separate identity and power base.
2. The young people planning the Conference had four alternatives before them: (a) to bring together solely those who believed in community organizing as the concentration point for the next year, and develop strategy for accelerating that campaign; (b) to bring together those who wanted to emphasize electoral action to plan strategy for the Presidential year and perhaps choose a Presidential ticket; (c) to hold three simultaneous conferences of the three constituencies at the Conference and arrange a structure by which the three groups would live in one house, with autonomous leadership and structure, but with machinery for collaboration and mutual aid when there was agreement to do so; (d) hold a single conference but evolve, as was done, a leadership which is based on two sets of parties, between the community organizers and the electoral wings on the one hand, and between both of these and the Black Caucus on the other.
3. The conference planners did a laudatory job of assuring democratic representation and democratic expression, but it seems to me that the effort reflected an immature form of participative democracy. Alternatives (a), (b), and (c) above gave considerably more hope for a mature participatory democracy than alternative (d). It was clear in advance that no common strategy would be wrought out of the divergent strategical perspectives represented at the Conference, and it was a mistake to call people together on such a basis. The SDS model was followed, in my opinion, too schematically. SDS is an organization composed of a single stratum of the population, the students, who find the NSA and similar moderate institutions too confining. NCNP, on the other hand is not, and will not be for some time, anything but a coalition of groups made up of members of many strata. The task here is much more difficult. Eventually the coalition will blend into an organization, but it was premature to think it could be born that way. Staughton Lynd and Ronnie Davis were

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right' in this respect, though I think they were wrong in their other main point, exaggeration of the value of congressional organization (e.g. JOIN) as against functional organizations, (e.g. Women's Strike for Peace or Trade Unionists for Peace).

4. The coalition that came out of the Conference is a porous one. That it did not disintegrate before being born does credit to the sense of dedication that existed amongst the 3,000 participants. No matter how angry each of us became over this or that point (in all three caucuses) there was a general and healthy realization that we had no place else to go, that the marriage had to be maintained no matter what the difficulties. But in the cool light of tomorrow it would be wise for the national board to consider the realities of the situation: namely that there were three distinct wings to the house we built. There is much more hope of survival for an NCNP which would have three autonomous sections, coordinating their work and coalescing only where agreement can be reached, than under the present form. I would strongly suggest that the Board consider setting up three separate bodies within NCNP, a community organizing group, an electoral politics group, and a Black organizing group, each with its own leadership. The Board might also consider asking the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, to become the fourth autonomous body. Coalition between these four groups would be practiced through a small governing board of six, one from each of the non-Black groups and three from the Black, to work out joint action where joint action is feasible, and to join in common projects such as raising and allocating monies. The present Board is an improvement over the previous one in that it more accurately reflects the currents in the movement. But it is not the final form; a more viable one can be found along the lines suggested here, I think.

5. It would be wrong to exaggerate the three issues that caused friction, namely the 13 points, the Foreman notions, and the 20,000 Black Caucus vote. The fact that there was no major walk-out indicates how strongly the delegates were united philosophically and how overriding was the desire to maintain unity. In the long run, if we build a healthy NCNP, these issues will be forgotten or washed away by healthier forms of collaboration. But precisely because we hope to coalesce more fruitfully we must analyze mistakes. It was wrong for the Black Caucus to insist that the 13 points be accepted without changing a comma; the three points that were in dispute could easily have been worked out to everyone's satisfaction, particularly if sub-committees of the Black Caucus and the Steering Committee had sat down and discussed it for a half hour. I am aware of the psychological overtones behind this issue and also aware of the problems within the Black Caucus with those who opposed formation of the coalition altogether. Nonetheless we must weigh this against the loss of credibility suffered by the vast majority who voted to endorse, say, ALL the resolutions of the Newark Black Power Conference without having read any of them. Foreman's speech had the merit that it relaxed tensions between Black and White appreciably, but it was a mistake for him--even jocularly--to introduce parts of his speech as resolutions and vote on them without discussion. For instance, while I favor the boycott of General Motors for doing business with South Africa, I might have preferred a boycott against Standard Oil as being more meaningful.

Finally, weighting the vote for the Black Caucus for no-choice party was a mistake not because of the number of votes assigned (the number could have been bigger as far as I was concerned) but because it was a bloc vote, making the discussion and vote of all other people irrelevant. Even more distasteful was the demagogery used by some who spoke on this matter from the floor. It could have been presented calmly as an expedient or a compromise; it did not have to be sold with this kind of inflated and false rhetoric.

6. A more significant weakness stems from the different needs of the three constituencies which made up the Conference. The community organizers and the Blacks appeal to citizens who are amenable to radical plaus. The electoral group, on the other hand, radical itself, nonetheless must appeal to many who are far more moderate. No real effort was made to help this group in that task. The mass action people--in the National Mobilization, for instance--have solved the problem through the policy of "non-exclusion". The April 15th demonstration included the whole political rainbow from reform democrats to left revolutionaries, but non-exclusion had as a corollary a relatively moderate platform. This was a wise decision, for I think history proves that radical action is stymied unless it can draw the liberal constituency in its direction. Even the Russian Revolution (or the American) would have been impossible if millions of the followers of Pan, Kereansky and other moderates were not drawn along with Lenin (and in the American Revolution hundreds of thousands of moderate merchants, farmers and lawyers were drawn along with Sam Adams and his Sons of Liberty). We did not make it possible here to pull along with us the innumerable liberals moving to the left who are looking for a new home. A slate of King-Spock might have achieved this. But radical delegates, with whom I agree politically, refused to consider that there was a world beyond the Palmer House in which we are a tiny minority. Tens of millions are against the war in Vietnam and against racism, but they are opponents of war and injustice out of liberal motivations, not radical ones. We can not win them by spouting phrases, but by building bridges. King-Spock, perhaps McKissick-Spock; or Spock-Rev. C.T. Vivian, might have built such bridges. I urge the new Board to review this matter once again. I'm sure that in a calm, small meeting it will come up with bridge-building formulas that will make our very radicalism infinitely more effective.
7. NCNP is now a babe in swaddling clothes, soon-hopefully-to begin walking. I'm impressed by the fact that the delegates left for home somewhat puzzled, somewhat disappointed, but with a total absence of rancor. This is a humanistic state of mind in which a movement can be built. We must not lose the opportunity. Ingenious mechanisms for participation and leadership must be evolved now so that tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands, can be brought into this movement. The coalition did not quite jell at the Palmer House, but it didn't fly apart either. It can be built.

Richard Lona, Chicago writer and editor of the pacifist weekly, *Pilgrim*, returned the following statement today on his return from the Geneva Conference on Vietnam and private talks with spokesman for North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front both in Stockholm and Paris. Mr. Lona, representing the Chicago Peace Council and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, was the chairman of the Asian American delegation to the international conference called by six world-wide peace movements.

The statement is as follows:

The North Vietnamese spokesman, with whom I held private talks, authorized me to advise the American public that there is only one condition for initiating negotiations to end the war—not many conditions as the American public has been led to believe. The United States must only stop the bombing of North Vietnam and issue an eight-word statement to that effect: "We have stopped the bombing of North Vietnam." No more, the spokesman told me, is required. The United States does not have to use the term "unconditional" or "permanent."

"What we are interested in," he said, "is the cessation of the bombing—not the words. As soon as bombing ends good things can follow." He did not pin down the time it would take for talks to begin, but implied it would be a few weeks.

Anomalous as it sounds this soft position on negotiations was accompanied by a tougher and more confident attitude toward the war. World-famous experts on Vietnam, such as Philippe Devilliers, France's foremost authority on Vietnam, told me that they haven't heard the NLF or North Vietnamese as confident or as determined for quite a few years.

NLF officials told me that their confidence springs from a number of factors, both political and military. Politically, they say, large numbers of people who were previously associated with the Unified Buddhist Church are losing hope of finding any solution except with the Front and are coming over to it in very considerable numbers. I may say that this estimate has been confirmed to me by a completely reliable religious pacifist leader, an American, who recently spoke with the top Buddhist leaders in Saigon. It was also confirmed by a key Buddhist monk with whom I spoke in Peking.

On the military front the NLF spokesman say that they have won two decisive victories in the last four months which have convinced them that

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and the anti-communist people struggled against the rightists and the third force. The Chinese government has been supporting the anti-communist forces. They are the main strength of the Nationalist Government. They have been carrying out a campaign to win "friends" for the Kuomintang. "The resistance struggle of the people and army of South Vietnam [will] bring a great victory never seen in history," they said.

My associate on the editorial board of *Liberation* magazine, David Dallinger, had an opportunity a few weeks ago to interview Vietnamese soldiers in Hanoi who had fought at Junction City. They told him that the U.S. had used 45,000 troops, of whom 14,000 had been "put out of action," and lost hundreds of the 850 tanks at their disposal, many of them to unexploded U.S. bombs which the Viet Cong had reassembled into mines. The defeat of American forces there, those soldiers said, made possible the offensive at the demilitarized zone and forced the U.S. to withdraw troops from the Mekong Delta, where a U.S. campaign had been projected. Dallinger was told: "If they couldn't conquer us at Junction City, they can't conquer us at all."

The NLF leaders asserted to our American delegation that the NLF controls 80 percent of the territory of South Vietnam and 10 million of the 14 million people. When an American said that these figures are much larger than those indicated by the U.S. government, the official said that the NLF has copies of CIA reports which put the figure even higher.

The North Vietnamese who spoke about negotiations also held a long and frank conversation with me on strategy. Both the North and the NLF, he said, faced a major problem of adjustment and reorganization up to the point where the U.S. armies reached 250,000. I got the impression he considered this a difficult period. "Now," he said, "we are ready for anything, regardless of how far the escalation goes." He laughed at the prospect of a United States invasion at the 21st parallel, near Vinh, the so-called thin neck of North Vietnam. He would not go into detail but he stated that the United States would get the "worst surprise" of the war if it undertook such actions.

He was more obviously concerned about the possibility of American bombing of the dykes, but he insisted that Hanoi has made plans for that too.

The North Vietnamese said that despite the human casualties suffered from the bombing, both industry and agriculture in 1966 recovered somewhat from the previous years. The "value of engineering output," he said, "has increased by 29.7 percent." The rice harvest, he claimed, was one of the best in his story. It may be "strange" to American ears, he insisted, but

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"representing more than 100,000 American planes lost from aerial bombardment, which is about twice as many as the Americans claim to have lost. In addition, they say, the North Vietnamese have shot down 2,000 American planes, and called this a military coup d'etat. They also claim an increase of 150 percent in captured to the allied year before the United Nations." [REDACTED]

In contrast to the 600 American planes lost that have been admitted by the Pentagon, the North Vietnamese say that have shot down 2,000. They discounted American claims of success in bombing their country's military barracks. "Do you think we're dumb enough to keep our soldiers alive in barracks?" they asked.

The NLF spokesman, in addressing the American delegation, was even more disparaging of U.S. efforts. "If all the calamities claimed by the U.S. were true," he said, "there would be none of us left. But as you see, we're growing stronger every day."

He called the American policy one of "burn all, kill all, destroy all." He accused the U.S. of perpetrating "hundreds of massacres." Nevertheless he said that when the U.S. claims to have rounded up large numbers of Viet Cong in a village it is usually old men and children.

So far as I knew every member of our American delegation was greatly surprised by the obvious self-confidence of the Vietnamese. They had not expected it. The Vietnamese neither boasted nor fawned.

In the private talks I held I got the impression that this self-assurance was genuine, not merely to impress the Conference. But I had the even more pervasive feeling that North Vietnam in particular felt that the initiation of negotiations would be very simple if the United States really wanted it. The North Vietnamese went out of their way to make it clear that there were not many conditions for talks but a single one. At one point a North Vietnamese spoke to me for a half hour about the different "road to socialism" being followed by Hanoi as against all other communist countries, and of the considerable difference between the Vietnamese and Chinese character. "Don't forget," he said, "our people are true individualists."

The implication was clear that Hanoi had no intention of becoming anyone's puppet. He also reminded me that despite the fact that his country had fought a long, bitter war with the French, relations with France now were good.